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Churches of Christ Salute You with a Herald of Truth: May Sermons

Herald of Truth

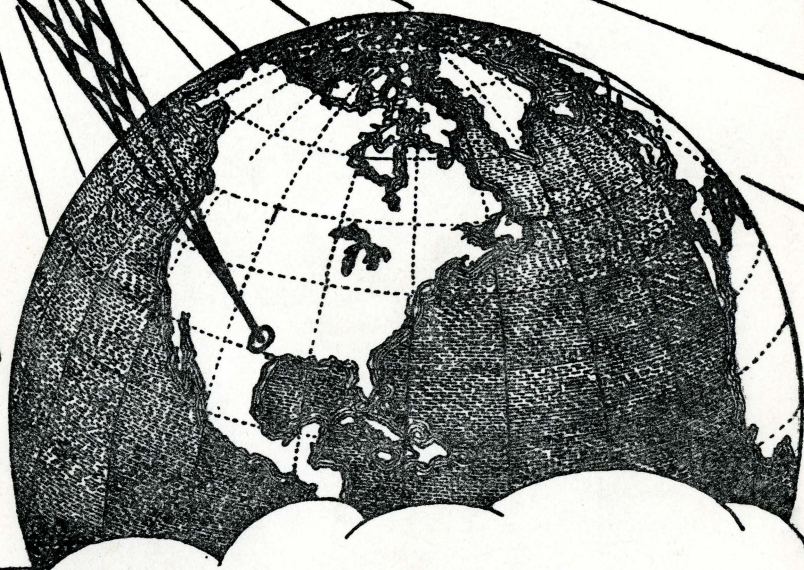
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Churches of Christ—
Salute You
with a



May Sermons, 1954

Herald of Truth

LIVING TO DIE

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERMON

By James W. Nichols

No. 118

May 2, 1954

Strange as it may seem, there are many who are living to die. This seems paradoxical in that to the vast majority of us death is a creature shrouded with dark doubts and shaded fears. But there are people today who are actually living to die.

Not very long ago I saw a picture showing some of the needy people of the world. As I beheld the children whose eyes were mere burned holes in a skull, whose bodies were bloated from want of food, and whose spindling legs could not hold up their bodies, I was made to realize that there are many living dead. They would perhaps have been relieved of their physical torture if they, as their parents, had fallen, breathing their last breath, into the gutter. Their every move was pain. Their every thought was the gnawing hunger. These, though living, are dead. In a sense, perhaps they lived to die, but it is not to this class that we refer.

There are millions of others even right here in our own nation who are clothed, fed and housed, but they are in a worse condition than these poor bloated, starving beings, for it is their souls that are bloated and starving. We are living in a feverish and tumultuous age. The struggles of humanity are accompanied by social decay, political upheavals, economic revolutions and religious calamities. Crime breeds in the court yards of jails and vice parades in the shadow of church spires. Volcanoes of immorality belch forth devastating lavas of destruction and of sin. Dignity is lost in the mad rush for economic gain; courtesy and decency are swallowed up in the looseness of the sweeping rapidity of the age. Europe has been since the war like a volcano smothered down but destined to burst forth sooner or later. Diplomats are at their tricks. The echo of the cannon's boom and hiss of mad bullets have not ceased. Our own troubles at home are too numerous and conspicuous to enumerate and discuss. Not only are we disturbed by world affairs, but we are made to realize, in the midst of corruption and decay, that civilized man amounts to little more than an educated savage.

Amidst the rumbling and rattling of the wheels of commerce, and the hum and din of the spindles of industry, and until the wee hours of the morning, the merrymaking of revelers, there seems to be only one word which shakes our every thought, turning our minds from war on foreign shores, from the turn of the wheels and grind of the machines, and the intoxicated laughter. What is it?—Death. Why? There are a variety of reasons.

First, to the completely irreligious, death is nothing but.

a black, yawning chasm with nothing to offer. Death represents the end of everything that they hold dear. It means the end of all relationships with mankind. It represents the end of every hope, because beyond death there is nothing but nothing. Oh, they are not infidels in that they reject the idea of God, but in their religious ignorance they know nothing about God. Their knowledge is all confined to business, to parties, to work, to machines, to money, and death represents the end of all of this.

Robert Ingersoll stoutly denied belief in a God. He denied the possibility of any existence beyond death, and yet when he came face to face with the reality of death before his brother's grave, he was moved to speak the heart of thousands and millions who, though not agnostics, have only empty hope. "Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of a wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the night of death, hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, 'I am better now.' Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas and tears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead." These with empty hope may cry in the words of Job in Job 14:4, "If a man die, shall he live again?" But in light of the words of the apostle Peter they stand without hope, "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous is scarcely saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?" (I Pet. 4:17-18.)

These are not they who live to die, for they cannot afford to die, and if the word "death" crosses the lips of their friends and companions they are made to shudder, because death holds no hope, but utter despair.

There are others who view death with a somewhat different view. They are not irreligious in the sense of being completely ignorant of God's Word, but they are that vast group that might be classified as "semi-religious." They know something of the teaching of God's Word. They believe in God and Christ and believe that the Bible is God's Word. They believe in Heaven and Hell and they know that they want to go to Heaven, but yet at the same time they realize in the light of the scriptures that they stand without hope as long as they remain in their present condition.

They have heard and mentally accepted the truth of the apostle Paul as he wrote in II Thess. 1:7,8,9: "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them

that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might."

Those of you in the audience today in this condition recognize that if this should be the day of the coming of the Lord that death would be utter disaster. You realize that you cannot even in ignorance look for a star of hope for there waits for you only weeping and gnashing of teeth, of which the Lord prophesied in Matthew 13:41: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth."

You realize that the Lord will say unto you as he spoke in Matthew, 25:41,46, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. And those shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life." And your part shall be with "the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death. (Rev. 21:8,10.)

No, my friends, you do not live to die, for to you death is a word that you would, if possible, seal from the lips of every associate. You recognize that you have not obeyed His gospel. You have not believed, as commanded in Hebrews 11:6; You have not repented as commanded in Acts 17:30; You have not confessed, as commanded in Matthew 10:32; nor have you been baptized for the remission of your sins as commanded in Acts 2:38. You do not live to die, for you only look forward to a judgment in which you will appear face to face with our God "who is a consuming fire."

There is another group that does not live to die. They might be classified as the gambling religionists. They are willing to take a chance that God did not mean what He said, or say what he meant. They are willing to take a chance on what their pastor or the preacher tells them. They are willing to take a chance that what they do is as good as what the Lord told them to do.

You listening today know what is in your own heart. As you search your works of men to find within them hope of justification of your acts of religion, you know deep within your heart that what you do is not what God has commanded through His Son and the apostles and the inspired writers. Oh, you are religious and you are zealous, but you find yourselves in the position of those described by Paul in Romans 10:2-3, "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For being ignorant of God's

righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God."

You are willing to take a chance that the Lord did not mean what he said when he spoke in Mark 16:15-16: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

You are willing to take a chance that Peter did not mean what he said in Acts 4:12. "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

You are willing to take a chance that Paul did not mean exactly what he said in Col. 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God."

You are willing to take a chance that James did not mean just what he said in James 2:24,26: "Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead."

My friends, you cannot afford to die, for death holds no hope of any kind, but these words of Paul, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil."

Who then are these who can live to die? Those who live to die are they who have Christ as the author of their eternal salvation, obeying His commandments. The writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 5:9, "And having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." They have believed and repented and confessed and been baptized. They continue faithfully in his service to the Lord even though they may be buffeted about with all of the trials and tribulations of life.

Ships at sea are tossed to and fro by the wild billows that rise on the foaming crest of a mountain wave. Then it wallows in the bed of two breakers. But the iceberg with its sheen, majestic calm, serenely drifts along undisturbed as the silvery spray dashes against its side. It is buried far beneath the roaring surface in the calm water. A man buried deep in the Saviour's love and grounded firmly on the Rock of Ages is as calm as he is unmoved by the signs of the time.

Those who live to die are Christians who can say in the

words of the apostle, Paul, in the face of all opposition: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 8:38-39.)

They who live to die are able to say as they near the end of life, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing." (II Tim. 4:7-8.)

Paul speaks explicitly about these people in II Cor. 4:16-17, 5:1-6, "Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. For we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven; For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life. Being therefore always of good courage, and knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord."

I knew of a grand old Christian mother who some time ago passed on. She was the mother of Brother Horace Busby, a faithful gospel preacher. Some time before her death her body had begun to decay to the point that she was almost helpless, nearly blind, walking with a stick. As others found it necessary to go about their work, she was lonely. But she would sit and rock and talk with God and tell Him about her troubles, and then sometimes she would just sit and rock, and say over and over, "I want to go home, Oh, I want to go home." She was living to die, because she had the assurance of something better.

My friends, you know where you stand today. Are you living to die, or are you dead while living? Those of you outside of Christ, will you not today obey Him? Those of you as His children who have stained your garments, do you not realize that you have only in the words of the writer of Hebrews, "A certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." (Heb. 10:27.) Will you not return in simple repentance and obedience? We pray for you.

LOOKING TO JESUS

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERMON

By James W. Nichols

No. 119

May 9, 1954

Nathaniel Hawthorne told the beautiful story of the Great Stone Face. A little boy was playing about the door of a cottage in the vale and fastened his eye on a place in the mountain that looked like a human face. It was a huge figure with forehead a hundred feet high and the rest of the head in proportion. The name of the boy was Ernest. His mother told him about a legend of this great stone face, told first by Indians that someone in the neighborhood was to grow up to be an ideal character and that in manhood he would resemble the face in the mountain to which he looked.

Ernest played, and as he grew up he looked longingly to the Great Stone Face. He searched the features of every inhabitant of the little village, hoping that he would find the man who was to resemble the Great Stone Face. Hawthorne told how that Ernest looked into the face of a millionaire who had been hailed as the ideal citizen, and Ernest said, "That is not the man", for he had a narrow spirit and a cold heart.

Ernest continued to look and search; he looked in the face of a great soldier and general. He looked in the face of a great statesman and president, but neither of these was the man of the Great Stone Face. By this time Ernest had grown to be an old greyed haired man.

Ernest, tho but a simple farmer, by his simplicity, his wisdom, his virtue and his love had become known and admired far beyond the boundaries of his native valley. A poet came out to his country home to see him and learn of him.

It so happened that Ernest had an appointment to speak to the people of the village that evening. His address was so simple, so wise, so pure and so tender that the poet said he was a prophet, and looking down the valley at the Great Stone Face, lighted up gloriously by the rays of the setting sun, he said, "Ernest is the exact image, he is the ideal promised." And the people agreed that he was the most truly great man of all the land.

The reason Ernest became the image of the Great Stone Face in the mountain was that from the time he was a little boy he looked upon it and admired it. Day by day, hour by hour, he kept his eye and his heart upon it.

Looking has great power and influence. Looking has a great power as we fasten our eyes upon some object for which we long, or as we fasten our mind's eye on some lofty purpose, or some distant goal. This is just as true in the realm of Christianity as anything else. The inspired writer of Hebrews knew this, and thus he taught us, "Look to Jesus", in Heb. 12:1-2.

LOOKING TO JESUS

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"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

A young man may get a vision of the life of a doctor, and if he keeps his eye on that goal, constantly working, striving, looking and yearning, he will become the reality of his vision. Let a young man or a young lady get the vision of the life of a teacher, if their eye never strays from that vision, eventually they'll be the type of teacher they have envisioned. No matter what we long to be, get the vision of a farmer, a mechanic, a business man, a salesman, a teacher, a doctor or a lawyer, keep our eye on that vision and eventually we'll become the reality of that vision.

In Genesis 3:6, we read, "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." The devil was no fool, he knew that if he could get Eve to the point that she looked upon the fruit in desire, which had been forbidden by God, and longed for that fruit, she would eventually take and eat. Had she not looked at the fruit while talking to the Devil she might have been able to overcome the temptation. Neither is Satan a fool today. He knows that if he cannot influence us to look with desire on sin he cannot tempt us.

There is another example of the power of looking. God told Abraham, "Get thee out of thy land and from thy kindred and from thy Father's house, unto a country I will show thee." Gen: 12:1. That was hard, it wasn't an easy thing to do, to leave all of his loved ones, to leave his associates, to leave everything that he had known up to that time. Even harder than that was the fact he was going to a country that he had not actually seen, but he had a vision. The writer of Hebrews 11:10 says, "that he looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. If Abraham had not held that vision before him, he would not have been faithful to God.

Still another example in the power of looking: good old Abraham told Lot, his nephew, to look over the country and to select that which he wanted. Lot looked in the wrong direction. And since people always go the way they look, we are told in Genesis the 13th chapter, that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. It was not long until Lot, with his family, moved into Sodom. Why did he move into Sodom? That is the way he looked. And eventually the city became so wicked that God decided to destroy it. Though Lot himself, with his

two daughters, was saved, Lot lost all that he had, because he had looked the wrong way and followed his gaze.

Remember Lot's wife. When the angels took Lot and his wife and his two daughters out to the edge of the city of Sodom they said, "Go and look not back," but as they went away, we are told that Lot's wife looked back and became a pillar of salt. To this very day by the words of Christ, Luke 17:32, Lot's wife stands as a monument to the fact that men are influenced by the way they look, or by the direction in which they look.

Peter wanted to walk on the water, and Christ commanded him to walk on the water. This he did, but only so long as he looked to Jesus. When Peter saw the waves and the danger, he began to sink, and had not the Lord carried him into the ship, he would have been lost.

When God's people were being bitten by fiery serpents and dying because of their sins, God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and erect it on a pole, and let the bitten ones look at it. We are told that in Numbers 21 this was done, and all who looked at the serpent of brass were healed.

Jesus drew a great lesson from this when he said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me." John 3:14-John 12:32.

Now let me ask some very pertinent questions. Are you looking to Jesus? Jesus plainly says that if man is to be lifted up, it will be by the drawing of Jesus himself. To whom are you looking? Is it Jesus? We are not talking about looking at Jesus, but we are talking about looking to Jesus. In our text the writer said, "looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." If you are to look to Jesus, you place your trust and your confidence in Him and in his power.

If today you look to Jesus as the author and the finisher of your faith it means that you believe in his supreme authority, as stated by Him in Matt. 28:18, "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."

It means that you believe the words of Peter in Acts 4:12, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." It means even more than that. It involves accepting Jesus as the King and sole authority. Who reigns supreme in your life? Is it Jesus and His word or is it the founder of some denomination? Is it the King of Kings or Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Scott, Smith or Campbell? Which reigns supreme in your heart today, the words of Christ or

disciplines, prayer books, catechisms, manuals or Articles of Faith?

My friends, if you are looking to Jesus it means that you want to repent of your sins, for he said in Luke 13:3, "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." You want to confess Him as the Son of God, for he speaks to you in Matt. 10:32, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." You want to be buried with Him in baptism, for he said in Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

But, my friends, there is something more to the lesson of Looking to Jesus, than just believing that he is the Son of God, repenting of our sins, confessing our faith in Him, and being buried with him in baptism. Christ said in Luke the 9th Chapter and 62nd verse, "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." Why? The Lord just meant this one thing. "If you set your eye on me, looking unto the crucified Christ and then look back, longing for the pleasures that have gone past, you are not fit to be a part of the kingdom of God."

That was what was wrong with the Israelites. You remember how that while they were being lead from the land of Egypt by Moses to the promised land, they became dissatisfied, disgruntled. They looked with a longing desire to get back to the leeks, onions, garlic and flesh-pots of Egypt. In this lusting, having taken their eyes from the promised land, they missed the goal. Fellow Christians, if you are looking upon the sinful pleasures of the world with desire, you are walking on dangerous ground. You have taken your vision off of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

That is just exactly what Christ meant, when he said, "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matt. 6:24. You cannot look with favor upon the social drink, dancing, legal adultery, swearing, and all such works of the flesh and be looking to Jesus as your Savior and Redeemer.

If your eye is on Jesus, you not only cannot engage in, but you cannot even look with favor toward drinking. God through Paul said, "Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:21.

If you are looking to Jesus, you not only have no right to divorce your mate for any other cause than adultery and marry another, but you cannot even condone such, even if it be legal adultery. Christ said in Matthew 5:32, "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and"

whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

If you are to look to Jesus, you will believe with all your heart the words of Christ, "A man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife: and the twain shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

In this day when God's name and Christ's name are taken in vain on many tongues there are some who claim to be looking to Jesus who would uphold such by saying that they do not mean anything by it. My brethren, if you are looking to Jesus you hear him as he says in Matthew 5:34-37, "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black."

We might as well face it. One reason that many of us are never able to persuade men to look to Jesus is that they cannot see any of Jesus in us.

My friends, if you as a child of God are looking to Jesus, then other men and women about you can see Jesus in your life. Just as the poet looked up at Ernest and saw in Ernest the features of the Great Stone Face, so men can look to you, to your life, to your words, and see in those the words, the life, the deeds of Christ. Paul says in II Cor. 3:18, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What kind of life do men see in you. Is it the life of the crucified Savior, lifted up, drawing all men unto Him, or is it the life of some man with all of his human frailties, and afflictions, as he is tossed to and fro with the devices and tools of Satan. What kind of life do men see in you? What kind of words do men hear from your lips? Are they the words of Christ, or are they the words of Satan?

Yes, Ernest looked at the Great Stone Face and he searched for the man with the features of the Great Stone Face, and although many were claimed as the ideal citizen, Ernest could not believe it, because he saw in them things that could not represent the character of the great stone face. Ernest himself became the image, because he kept his eyes on that face in the mountain. He moulded his character to the form of the man he had envisioned. I ask you not today to look at the stone face in the mountain, but to Jesus, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who is able to save you and redeem you. May I assure you, keep your eye on Jesus, his authority, his command, his life, and some day you will stand before God and Christ and all the people of the earth and hear Christ confess your name because He recognizes you as his own.

DIVIDING THE ROBE

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERMON

By James W. Nichols

No. 120

May 16, 1954

It was the custom of the Roman soldiers to take a prisoner's raiment at his death and divide it among themselves, and in the crucifixion of Christ it was no different. John records this incident in John 19:23-24, "The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and made four parts, to ever soldier a part; and also the coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore one to another, Let us not rent it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did."

It was a problem for them when they came to his robe. It had no seams which a sharp knife could follow and still leave the cloth intact. To tear it into four parts, one for each soldier, would completely ruin the cloth. For this reason, they decided to leave it whole and cast lots for its ownership. In so doing, John says that they fulfilled the prophecy of the Psalmist. This surely is another proof of the inspiration of the scriptures and the divinity of Christ, that so small an incident should be prophesied and fulfilled.

But there is more than the fulfillment of prophecy in this passage. There is a tremendous lesson. That which is meant to be one cannot be divided without ruining it. As the cloth could not be cut without destroying its value, neither can the Church be divided without each part becoming of no use.

One of the greatest blights on humanity today and one which blocks out its only hope is denominationalism. Christianity is some nineteen hundred years old. It numbers, in the broadest sense of the term, perhaps seven hundred and fifty million adherents. Christendom, as the term is used, is divided today into more than three hundred sects and factions. The number is increasing almost monthly. These hundreds of warring factions, or, as they are popularly known, "denominations" spend approximately one and one quarter billion dollars annually supporting preachers, teachers, evangelists, priests, etc., to further their peculiar aims, doctrines, and practices. As all things earthly and of human origin grow dim, Christianity, pure and simple, grows brighter. Although there still remains a billion souls unconverted by the Gospel, there does not exist a nation today to which it has not been preached to a greater or less extent. There is not a people that hasn't heard the story of the Christ in more or less polluted form.

Unfortunately, however, what Mr. Average Citizen knows as Christianity today is the most prolific source of unbelief,

strife, jealousy, hatred, wrangling, and division within the ranks of those professing to be believers in, and followers of, Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. This means many of those professing to be Christians and devoted to the task of "contending earnestly for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" are actually allies of the unscrupulous enemy of souls, satan.

This condition, known to all today as denominationalism, is, I verily believe, the greatest menace to the church that Christ built. This condition is directly contrary to the letter and spirit of pure Christianity. It is a condition expressly condemned in the New Testament both by precept and example; both by command and illustration. Denominationalism is a false theory which asserts in speech and practice that the church Christ built is not necessarily organically one. Denominationalism contends the church Christ built was not originally intended to be a unit. Denominationalism affirms the church Christ built can scripturally be divided into any number of sects, parties, factions, church societies; each one separate from, and independent of, all others. No one, however, can read the New Testament carefully and prayerfully and not discover such a theory is manifestly contrary to what is taught therein.

Christ told His disciples, "I will build my church" and in the seventeenth chapter of John there is recorded one of the most fervent prayers for unity that this old world will ever know; a prayer by Jesus Himself. Hear Him as he pours out his heart unto God: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovest me." (John 17:20-23.)

I suppose there is no more severe rebuke than that given by Paul in I Cor. 1:10-13; and what was his subject? Immorality? No. Denying that there is a God? No. His subject was division. Hear him: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been signified unto me concerning you, my brethren, by them that are of the household of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I mean, that each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" Yet today there exist more than 300 denominations, as they are called in Christendom. Yet they preach conflicting doctrines, profess contradic-

tory tenets and creeds, and comprise separate and non-fellowshipping organizations.

The the soldiers would have rendered the cloak of Jesus worthless by division, men render their religion useless by dividing the Church.

But why all this division? What is the cause of denominationalism and what can be its cure?

First, we should note that very few changes are sudden or abrupt. Denominationalism is not the process of a change in men's thinking and actions overnight. It was the result of unconscious drifting. Nineteen hundred years ago there was only one church, for Paul said in Ephesians the first chapter that the body of Christ is the church and in the fourth chapter, that there is only one body. This church was made up of men and women who accepted the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it only, in their religion. But over a period of many years man began to drift away from the principles of Christ and the apostles.

Paul called it a falling away from the faith, in I Tim. 4:1-3, "But the Spirit saith expressly that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth." He warned Timothy concerning the digression, for in II Tim. 4:3-4, "For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables." There was an unconscious drifting from New Testament principles beginning in the very latter part of the first century which has continued on even unto this present day.

Denominationalism is also the result of the desire of men to follow other men. Even while the apostles were still living and speaking and writing there were some who said, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ." Here were the seeds of denominationalism, but Paul's severe rebuke choked them down. When men desire to follow writings and the teaching of other men and have become their ardent disciples, this is one of the very basic causes of denominationalism.

Another tool of Satan to divide the Church is the desire to substitute. I suppose that we live in an age in which substitution in secular realms has become the rule of the day. I heard not too long ago that man is making a substitute milk so near in taste and quality to the dairy milk produced, that we could not tell the difference. But in Christianity we are

not dealing with human taste and judgment. It is not a consideration of what I want or think. God is the judge. Remember when Naaman the leper was told to dip in the River Jordan, he argued that the rivers of his own land were just as good. And the sons of Aaron, the priest, felt that the fire that they used would be as good as that which God had commanded, but God consumed them with a fire from Heaven.

Peter on the day of Pentecost plainly set forth the conditions of forgiveness of sins: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Today men want to substitute coming to the mourner's bench, or substitute faith only, or grace only, or repentance and prayer. For New Testament burial and resurrection in baptism, of which Paul speaks in Romans the sixth chapter, many have substituted sprinkling and pouring. Some have substituted in place of the bread and fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper the giving of the bread only to the members of the communion. Others substitute human names for the name of the Lord and still others substitute man-devised societies and organizations with a religious hierarchy in place of the simple organization of the New Testament Church with Jesus Christ as the King.

Still another cause of denominationalism is the desire to hold to traditions and customs of the past. There are many good and sincere people in this audience today who have never taken the trouble to search the Scriptures to see whether or not the things they believe, practice and even preach can be found in the Bible. Because they were brought up in these practices, because their parents and grandparents did them, that's enough.

A last cause of which we will speak today is the making of laws and rules which are foreign to New Testament Christianity. Hear Paul again as he warned Timothy concerning the falling away and the teaching of some in I Tim. 4:3: "Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth."

Some religious bodies today have a part in their rules and orders the observance of special days which were never a part of God's plan of redemption through Christ Jesus. And Paul rebuked the Galatians for this very thing in Galatians 4:10-11: "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means, I have bestowed labor upon you in vain."

My friends, there is no man that has the right to make laws and rules where the Word of God does not make them. John says so plainly in II John 9-11: "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God:

he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works." Christ said in Matthew 15:9, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Now then, what can be the remedy for this disastrous blight that divides homes and confuses truth-seekers and causes men to be led astray? What can stop the blind guides of which Christ spoke in Luke 6:39: "Can the blind guide the blind? Shall they not both fall into a pit?" What can be done to prevent the enormous waste of money, time and energy spent in upholding and spreading conflicting doctrines? What is the answer to the problem that more than any other one thing holds back evangelization of the whole world completely?

As there are many contributing factors there are many aspects that must be considered for the remedy. We should not be concerned primarily, however, with practices, but as Christ was concerned with a man's thinking, so we must be concerned with attitudes and principles. Denominationalism is the result of wrong-thinking and of a wrong attitude. Christ said in Luke 6:43-45, "For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

First, men must be willing to accept a standard of authority and a final court of appeal. Should you and I begin to assemble a machine and each of us has a different set of instructions, there could be no unity in our action.

We begin to discuss the usage of a word and its present meaning. We disagree and then we immediately examine the dictionary, because it is the source of authority. It is the final court of appeal.

The creeds of men are not the answer to the source of authority. Since the denominations of Christendom claim that they are a result of the Bible, why should we not all be willing to accept the Bible, God's Word, as the only source of authority and the final court of appeal? My friends, until the Bible becomes the standard with men believing and respecting the words of Christ when He said, "All authority in Heaven and on earth hath been given unto me," there is nothing that can be done to cure denominationalism.

If we accept the Bible as the standard of authority that means that we will accept the Bible plan of salvation, the requirement of faith as found in Hebrews 11:6, the requirement

of repentance, as found in Luke 13:3, the requirement of confession of faith as found in Romans 10:10, and baptism, a burial in water for the remission of sins, as found in Acts 2:38, Acts 22:16, and Romans 6:1-6.

To accept the Bible as the standard would mean that men would throw off their man made names and become nothing more than Christians of which Peter speaks in I Pet. 4:16: "But if a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name."

It also would mean that men would be untied into one body, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, wearing the name of Christ and God rather than that of men.

In fact, my friends, it means that you and I and millions of others could become as one, being of the same mind and of the same judgment, because we have a common standard, a common source of authority for all of our worship and our services. That standard, God's word.

My friends, today will you not do something about this disease which is more dangerous than all physical diseases. For as long as denominationalism reigns and division is the rule, thousands and millions will go to their death unprepared to meet their God. I am pleading with you today—throw off the cloaks of division and in simple obedience to Christ's plan of redemption put on that robe of salvation. Will you not today believe, repent, confess your faith in Christ, and be buried with Him in baptism, throwing aside every denominational creed and theory, being nothing more nor nothing less than a Christian, a soldier of the King.

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERMON

A preacher is often made to wonder just how much those in the audience comprehend of the lesson he preaches. Many times as he sees some few turn and look about them or gaze out the window he would almost give anything to know what they are thinking. He also realizes that it may be many who are in the audience trying to interpret everything that is said from a material standpoint.

I have a friend who, when he hears a sermon, quite often mentions the fact that he was thinking during the sermon how he could put some of the principles of the lesson to work in making himself a more successful salesman. He feels very disappointed when a sermon is delivered that doesn't give him some new technique that may increase his sales. His concern principally is how to make himself a better salesman and thus he interprets a vast majority of all sermons. In so doing he misses the very purpose of the lessons.

The Lord was faced with the same problem. On more than one occasion he was interrupted by someone in the audience as he preached asking some question far removed from the subject of the sermon. On one particular occasion the Lord was delivering a masterpiece, warning his disciples of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He reminded them that there is nothing that is covered or hid that shall not be revealed and made known.

There was in the audience on that occasion at least one who understood not that which the Lord taught, but being amazed by the wisdom with which the Lord spoke he interrupted Jesus saying: "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." This man had missed the entire lesson because his mind was filled with his own problem. He asked that Jesus meditate between himself and his brother in the matter of how an inheritance was to be divided.

We do not know the details in this particular case, nor the laws of the land that would necessarily apply to the situation, but we are made to wonder if it may not have been both of these brothers were at fault, for the Lord seems in his answer to rebuke both in his denunciation of covetousness. The Lord said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Luke 12:14-15.

Covetousness is twofold. It is covetousness on the part of the man who has not and seeks to obtain more than is rightfully his. This might have been the case of the man who interrupted the Lord so rudely. It is equally wrong for the man who possesses to hold on to more than is rightfully his. Thus

the Lord said, "Keep yourselves from all covetousness," and the reason so emphatically stated, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

A man's worth cannot be measured by the land registered in his name, the cattle carrying his brand, the stocks or bonds listed as his, or the money deposited in the bank under his name. The worth of a man is determined by what he is. Patrick Henry concluded his will by writing, "This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family, the riches of Christ can give them one which should make them rich indeed."

As many have failed, to their sorrow, to distinguish gold and "fool's" gold, so many wasted their lives in building empires and storing away empty riches which could buy for them neither health nor happiness.

Unfortunately many a tomb stone raised over the body of a wealthy man should have read, "This man was a success, but a failure."

The Lord very dramatically proved this fact in the parable that he then told to his audience. "And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." Luke 12:16-21.

It is not often that we hear of a rich or even wealthy man referred to as a fool. Unfortunately many have come to feel that a man's bank account is indicative of his wisdom. But here was a story of a man who was a rich fool.

There is no indication that he was a fool because he was rich. The men and women who in defense of their own wastefulness very smugly say, "You know the Lord taught that money is the root of all evil", but not so. Paul told Timothy in I Tim. 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil." There is a vast difference between money being the root of evil and the love of money being the root of all evil.

The idea that it is wrong for a child of God to make money is contradicted in the language of the Holy Spirit. Paul writing to the Ephesian brethren said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Ephesians 4:28.

There is no indication that he was a fool in moral weak-

ness or viciousness of character. We are led to believe that he was a good stable citizen, highly respected. Nor was this man a fool because he was a spend-thrift. He wasn't a prodigal nor a pleasure seeker. He wasn't a lazy idler, but a thrifty consistent worker, making his money honestly with no oppression of the oppressed or the widows and orphans.

Notice, the Lord said that the ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. I dare say that there is no more honest or upright way to secure wealth than through the ground, and this man's ground was fertile and he saved its fruits.

Why was he a fool? Let us look a little bit closer at this man and listen to him as he talks to himself. The Lord said he reasoned within himself saying, "What shall I do, because I have no where to bestow my fruits." He is completely at a loss now that he is wealthy and does not know what to do with himself. It seems that he has had no further aim in life other than just to work and to save. He knows not where to spend his fruits. Thus has been the disappointment of many a wealthy man. Constantly looking and searching for wealth. They find no satisfaction in wealth, for they know not how to use it. This man had fallen into a well known pitfall. Money is neither moral nor immoral, but rather stored up human power. But when man comes to the point that he knows not how to harness this power he is of all men most miserable.

But listen to him further, as he wrestles with his problem. After some indecision he says, "This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods, and I will say to my soul, soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat drink and be merry." It is not often that we talk to a man or listen to him talk that we do not gain some insight into his real self. This man was a real egotist. He saw no one but himself and considered no one but himself. As he talked he said, I, I, my, my, my, I. He had no concern for anything or anybody else, and perhaps he felt quite well. For it seems that he made up his mind that his purpose in life was to get to the point where he could say to his soul, eat, drink and be merry. Now he has reached this point, and there are no worries of any kind whatsoever.

But then as a bolt of lightning out of the sky amidst a pleasant summer evening, God said, "Thou fool, this night is thy soul required of thee." I do not know that the man heard God. We need to remember that many times God may speak concerning us and we not aware that it applies to us. Whether or not the man heard the thunder or saw the lightning of God's words it was still true.

This man was a practical atheist. He left God entirely out of his calculations, and God said, "The things which thou

hast prepared, whose shall they be?" God thus indicates that all of his labors were in vain. The Lord concludes the parable "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

What would you think of a man who though in business with a more or less silent partner continually took the profits of the business and used them to his advantage, never dividing with his partner? The law of the land says he is an embezzler, and that is what this man of which the Lord spoke was. He is in partnership with God. Though the land may have been in his name, the cattle bearing his brand, the seed purchased in his name and the men employed by him, God was a partner and there is no mistake about it.

The cattle on a thousand hills belong to God and the hills underneath them. The rain, the sunshine, the fertility of the soil, all belong to God. When it came time for this man to divide he refused to acknowledge any partner, and as an embezzler or a thief must pay in punishment, so this man was destined to pay eternally facing God his partner unprepared.

This man though rich was a pauper. Why? Christ expressed it so vividly when he said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Matthew 6:19-21. What good will wealth and riches do you as you stand before the Lord naked as it were.

There is no truer proverb than "You cannot take it with you." It is said that when J. P. Morgan died the offices of his companies closed, but one of his employees the day of his funeral went to the office and found a porter cleaning up. Their conversation was common to the conversation of many Americans, how much had this millionaire or billionaire been worth. And the man said to the porter, "I wonder how much J. P. left," and the despairing reply was, "I suppose he left it all." What good is it going to be if a man gains for himself wealth but is not rich toward God, thus losing his soul? That is what Christ is trying to get us to see when he said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26.

The sad part about all of this is that thousands will read this passage but will still continue blindly on to their destruction. For they say, this is true about a rich man, and I am not rich. No, the fact that this man was rich is only incident to the story. The story is about a man who was poor toward God.

Every man is poor toward God who does not fulfill the

purpose of his existence. Did you ever stop and ask yourself the question, Why am I here? Why was I born? What is my purpose? If you have failed to answer that question correctly, it matters not whether you have one million dollars or one dollar, you are as much a fool as this rich man.

The apostle Paul said concerning Christ, "All things have been created by Him and for Him." Colossians 1:16. I dare say there are nine in the audience today who deny the fact that we are created by the hand of Christ, but how many of us actually believe and demonstrate this fact that we were created for Him? If you have felt that you were brought into the world to be a mere typist, salesman, mechanic, farmer, teacher, doctor or lawyer, you have missed the very purpose of life. No matter to what you have attained, prestige or riches, you are a failure standing in poverty in the sight of God.

The man is a fool who thinks that he can succeed without serving his purpose for existence.

Have you been a fool? You have if you have thought that you could get by without being a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews says, "it is appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." This is one appointment which you will never miss nor delay. You are as destined for judgment as night is destined to follow day. What good will be the few pitiful belongings that you may have been able to preserve when God begins to examine your true worth, "for a man's life consisteth not of that which he possesseth." All of us are here by the mercy of God, and the man who refuses to serve the Lord Jesus Christ is cheating his partner, God. You were brought into this business of life by Jehovah, and when you fail to fulfill the purpose for your existence you have embezzled Him. If you think you can get by with it you truly are a fool.

Now then, what is involved in this service to the Lord Jesus Christ? You must believe that God is and that Jesus is His Son through whom we can have redemption. The writer of Hebrews says it just as plainly as this: "Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing unto God." You must also repent. Paul tells us that all men everywhere must repent, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:" Acts 17:30. The Lord said we cannot serve two masters. If you think you can serve Satan in unrighteousness and God and righteousness on the other hand you are just badly mistaken. Therefore, the Lord calls you to repentance: turning your back on Satan and corruption. You must not be ashamed of this one whom you serve, the Son of your Partner. Christ said "He that confesseth me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:32. But more than this, we must be buried with the Lord in baptism for the remission of sins.

Christ said that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Someone says, I do not understand why I have to be baptized. The answer is simple: the Lord commended it and therein by humbling ourselves we are able to show some of the gratitude of a heart for God's mercy and love.

The man or woman that goes about the business of life having failed to do these things is simply rejecting them like fools. There is going to be a day of accounting, and if we have failed in the very purpose of our existence then we shall pay in everlasting punishment and destruction. But more than this: the man or woman who has become a child of God and has escaped from the defilements of the world through obedience to the Gospel and then turns his face from God in disobedience, is the greatest of all fools. If you think that you can get by simply because you are a child of God, you will have a rude awakening. Peter tells us so plainly, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." II Peter 2:20-22.

My friends, I wish that I could impress upon you this one simple truth, "that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." However successful you may be, if you are not rich toward God your life is an utter failure.

Some men have the idea that a man's value is based upon how much he can make, save and keep for himself. I am reminded of a sermon that was preached by an outstanding preacher. Listened to by an old miser. The speaker had three divisions to his sermon. He interested the old man when he began with this contention, "Make all you can." This appealed to him. That was his philosophy of life. But then the preacher moved to the second, which was even more interesting to the old miser than the first, for he said, "Save all you can." The decision of the old fellow was that this was the most profound preacher he had ever heard. He felt that he wanted to follow this man. But then as the preacher passed to the third point and said, "Give all you can" the lesson was ruined for the listener. The preacher had the very essence of a sensible life: "make all you can, save all you can and give all you can to the service of God and the blessing of man.

Will you not my friend today render unto God His due by simple obedience to His way and will.

"Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth," but the service he gives to God and his fellow man.

"POWER OF THE CROSS"

RADIO AND TELEVISION SERMON

James W. Nichols

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Not too long ago I read a story that told of English soldiers who patrolled an area of India. They didn't know the language of the people or had they been able to comprehend the thinking of the natives. On several occasions they were called upon to execute some native who had been convicted by the courts. They understood not the problem, nor did they know why he was being executed. As I read this gripping story I thought how near this must be to the thinking of the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross.

There is a great deal told when Matthew writes concerning the four soldiers who crucified the Lord by saying, "and they sat down and watched him there." These four Roman soldiers were foreigners. This practice of crucifying Jews was nothing unusual. It was a part of their ordinary work in those troublesome times, and this man was just one more.

What a strange picture. These men, who drove the nails through the hands and feet of Christ and who strained to lift up the cross and plant it in the ground, divided the raiment of the Lord and then sat down to rest, wait and watch. They must have watched with eyes that saw nothing. Maybe dreaming of other things until they were aroused by the quaking of the earth.

Isn't it strange to think how these four men were so close to the great event in the world's history and saw nothing that meant anything to them or moved them until the earth did quake and the tombs opened.

Yet, I wonder how many in this audience today are almost like those Roman soldiers of old in that the cross of Christ means nothing to them, but just another death to be recorded in the annals of history.

Paul said in his first letter to the Corinthians, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." I Cor. 1:18. To some this might be confusing, for they read that Paul wrote to the Romans, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," but both of those are true, for the first cry of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins.

If you will look back through time you will be able to see that for the establishment of every cause, or every step of progress there have been graves that paved the way. The independence of the American people was not accomplished without the sacrifice of lives. The wheels of industry have not rolled forward without the death of some who pushed the

wheels. Grey in his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" said:

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike th' inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

As it is with political freedom and the wheels of industry, so it is with life itself. The cross of Christ looms as the sacrifice of sacrifices, the dedication of dedications, and the hope of hopes to them who are saved. Yes, it is the power of all powers, for it is the power of God.

As we are able today to look at the cross of Christ, it first of all should mean the sacrifice of sacrifices, God's demonstration of his idea of sacrifice. Christ said "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." John 3:16.

It is hard for us to comprehend such an overwhelming love that would move a father to sacrifice his own son. But even more difficult than ever is the fact which Paul points out in Romans the fifth chapter, "But God commandeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Does not the cross reach out and touch your heart strings, realizing that God gave up his own Son for man who was at war with God.

Yet there is even a deeper lesson in the sacrifice on the cross. Many parents have been willing for their sons to march off to war to defend the principles of independence and freedom, but there was in their hearts every hope of their return and escape from death. God gave his son for death, not that independence or freedom be protected for His own, but that the enemies might have a way to make peace with Him.

There is no human experience that can illustrate adequately the sacrifice that God made and His love that Christ bestowed in his death, but perhaps this story will bring it just a little bit closer to our understanding.

Where two railroads cross each other there is always a target house and keeper. There was a man who was the keeper watching a train coming along the river by which the tracks had been laid. The train was crowded with tourists and it was coming rapidly. The man then looked and saw his own child playing with the pebbles on the railroad track. He grabbed for the lever, but his hand froze as he was going to open the switch which would throw the train in the river. His hand froze as he thought of the mothers and babies on the train that would be thrown into the river, and with his heart

breaking, he grasped that lever while the massive engine cut his child's little body to death.

The train was stopped, and as the passengers departed from the train they saw the man picking up the broken body, crying as though he could never stop. It was his body, his only child, his baby. He had sacrificed to save them. They gave him money, but what good was that money compared to the loss of his child. Sometimes men want to tell what God has done for us. O, such a tremendous and powerful expression of sacrifice and love is the cross. If you want to know what God considers sacrifice, look to the cross. If you want to know how much God loves, look to the cross. The cross is the Power of God.

The cross stands as God's power to save. Paul said in the Colossian letter, Col. 1:12-14, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." The blood shed on the cross is the means by which God washes away the sins of man and makes his soul pure before God.

One day in the court of Greece many years ago the judges condemned a man to die for a crime against the government. But his brother, a soldier, immediately stepped forward and thrust forth the stumps of his arms, for his hands had been cut off. He said, "Sires, you have sentenced my brother to death because he has sinned against the government. I gave my two hands in battle for the government, and now my brother is my only support. I beg of you for my sake, let my brother live." The judges rose saying, "For your brother's sake you are pardoned."

Thus the cross stands as a way of redemption in that God saves us for His son's sake. Death had a strangle hold upon man, but God sent his son into the very jaws of death by the cross, but in that cross was Christ made triumphant for death could not hold Him, and in His death he overcame the power of death. Christ came forth from the grave a conqueror and to conquer, and so it was that death died at the cross. Thus Paul was able to say, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I Cor. 15:54-57. My friends, if you are saved from your sins, if you are saved from death, it will be because of the cross of Christ.

The cross, however, should mean something more to us than just this. The cross should stand as an expression of God's warning. Not too many months ago on a dark cold night

I was driving between Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The ground was covered with snow and the road was slippery with ice. As the lights of the car felt their way around that stretch of highway I suddenly saw ahead some red lights. It happened that the lights had been set because a truck had skidded on to a bridge and was lodged cross way on that bridge. Those lights were a warning, "Don't go on, there is disaster ahead." Today, my friends, the cross stands as a warning to you that the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is life in Christ Jesus. Don't you dare go past the cross to the judgment. If you reject the Son of God who hung there on the cross and refuse to hear His word there is no hope. Peter says that there is "none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

As you stand here and look back some two thousand years and behold Jesus of Nazareth suspended between the darkened heaven and cruel earth, does it not stir your heart and move you to tears in knowing that he died for you to make a way of escape. Yes, the cross is the power of God to them that are saved because it is the moving force, the theme of the gospel, God's power unto salvation. But if you stand and look at that cross and heed not the words of Him who suspended upon it, there is no hope for you. Peter said, "For the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God: and if it begin first at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God?" I Peter 4:17. There is no hope for you if you obey not the gospel of Christ. However, I cannot comprehend a man standing and by faith beholding the cross of Christ and not falling down on his knees in love at the feet of Jesus. I do not believe a man can understand the cross of Christ and all involved in it and fail to love the Lord with all of his heart. Christ said, "He that loveth me will keep my commandments." And so it resolves itself to this one simple thing: If you do not obey the gospel you do not love the Lord: If you know the power of God and the cross you most certainly must love Him who died upon it. If you love him you will obey him, and if you obey him you will be saved and redeemed. The writer of Hebrews expresses it by saying, "though he was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation:" Hebrews 4:8-9.

The death of Christ on the cross was the supreme event of all time and eternity. Death by crucifixion was the most shameful and ignoble death that man could suffer. It was a death fitted for criminals, murderers and thieves, but the Lord Jesus willingly died and literally poured out His blood on the cross to bring about the redemption of mankind. As He staggered under the weight of the cross, trying to bear it along to Golgotha, as He passively allowed them to drive the nails through his hands and his feet, as they lifted him up to die, he could have called to His aid 10,000 legion of

angels. But no, for His death was the atonement for the sins of mankind.

My friends, what does the cross mean to you? Do you believe that He is the Son of God? I feel that as you by faith picture Him on the cross that you are made to say as did the soldiers who crucified Him, "Truly this was the Son of God." Have you repented of your sins? If not, I tell you with all the kindness possible that the cross means nothing to you for Him who died upon it said, "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Have you confessed your faith in Him before others? The Saviour said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:32. Have you gone down in that watery grave of baptism, dying a death likened unto His and raised in a resurrection likened unto His? Remember the Lord said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." If you have not done these few simple things you do not love the Lord and the cross means nothing to you.

Child of God, how is it with your life today? Is it a faithful obedient life, or is it a life that denies the knowledge of a death on the cross of Calvary? You may be a child of God, but if you are not living in obedience to the gospel of the Lord you shout your defiance to Him who pleads as He hangs from the cross. Will you not today open your eyes and see the cross, feel its power, for Jesus said, "If I be lifted up then will I draw all men unto me." God reached toward man in the cross and man can reach toward God only through the cross in obedience to Him who died on the cross.

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